



Air Force News

Kosovo operations validate bomber concept of operations

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Air Combat Command Public Affairs

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (AFPN) -- The operation in Kosovo is validating the Air Force's bomber concept of operations, the commander of the Air Force's main provider of combat air forces said.

"I think the great thing that we've seen over the past few years is that all the (theater commanders) have begun to recognize the contribution that bombers can make to their operational plans," said Gen. Dick Hawley, Air Combat Command commander.

Currently, ACC is providing its heavy bomber fleet aircraft -- B-2s, B-1Bs and B-52Hs -- to NATO's Operation Allied Force.

ACC's bomber concept of operations includes using the B-52 initially as a standoff platform using munitions such as the conventional air-launched cruise missile to begin attacking critical enemy nodes -- such as command and control -- early in the fight, Hawley said.

The B-2, with its stealth characteristics, is used to get in and take out high-value targets deep in enemy territory that can't be readily destroyed by any other system. The B-1, with its ability to be packaged with other types of aircraft -- fighters and other self-protection assets -- is used to accurately deliver massive quantities of munitions, according to Hawley.

"If you look at Operation Allied Force, that's exactly how they've been used," he said.

"We brought the B-52 in early using the CALCM. We brought the B-2 in as quickly as we could and started to take out some of those heavily defended targets deep (in enemy territory) that no other system can get to, either because other systems can't penetrate or don't have the lethality required. Then, of course, the B-1 got in and they've been doing great work using their ability to drop tons of ordnance, including very effective cluster munitions, to take down important targets in the theater.

"So, it's a great validation of our current concept of operation," Hawley said.

Operation Allied Force marks the first time the Air Force's heavy bomber fleet was used together operationally, according to Maj. J.C. Valle, deputy chief of ACC's Weapons and Tactics Branch.

"This major milestone for the bomber force shows the pride and professionalism of the entire Air Combat Command team," said Lt. Gen. Tom Keck, ACC vice commander. "The added dimension of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets combined with bomber and fighter strike packages is unbeatable.

"We're also proving that the Air Force is ready and is truly an expeditionary force," Keck continued. "Our sustainable airpower packages that are effects driven, give the theater commanders what they need when and where they need it."

The B-2 stealth bomber made its operational debut March 24 when two Spirits dropped 32 2,000-pound joint direct-attack munitions during a 31-hour, nonstop mission from Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo.

Six B-52s from Barksdale AFB, La., were sent to Royal Air Force Fairford, England, Feb. 17 and took part in the first wave of air strikes March 24. Four additional B-52 bombers and about 30 people from the 5th Bomb Wing, Minot AFB, N.D., were ordered to deploy to RAF Fairford March 27.

B-1B bombers were ordered to deploy to Europe in support of NATO operations in Yugoslavia March 29. The B-1B made its operational debut Dec. 1 over the skies of Iraq during Operation Desert Fox.

While the milestone is important historically, the much more important factor operationally is integrating all three bombers with the other combat air forces' assets, according to Valle.

"Integrating all aspects of combat airpower is the key to successful bomber employment," he said. (Courtesy of ACC News Service)

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